



The Guardian Ad Litem

VOLUNTEER

Job Description

A Guardian ad Litem is a trained community volunteer who is appointed by a district court judge to investigate and determine the needs of abused and neglected children petitioned into the court system by the Department of Social Services. The Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Volunteer makes independent recommendations to the court for services, which focus on the needs of each child. The Guardian ad Litem advocates for a permanent and safe home for every child within the shortest time possible.

Activities

- Visits the child and keeps the child informed about the court proceedings.
- Communicates with the Attorney Advocate to develop legal strategies to further the best interests of the child client.
- Gathers and assesses independent information on a consistent basis about the child to recommend a resolution that is in the child's best interest.
- Interviews the parents, guardians, caretakers, social workers and other service providers and reads records related to the family.
- Seeks cooperative solutions with other participants in the child's case.
- Writes fact-based, child-focused reports for court hearings.
- Attends and participates in court hearings and other related meetings to advocate for a permanent plan, which serves the child's best interest.
- Testifies, if needed, to inform the court of changes in the child's situation.
- Ensures that the court knows the child's wishes.
- Keeps all records and information confidential.
- Monitors court ordered services and keeps the court informed about needs of the child.
- Consults with local program staff for support and guidance.

Qualifications

The main qualifications are a sincere concern for the well being of children and a continuing commitment to advocate for a child until a safe and permanent home is obtained. The volunteer must also be a mature adult of sound character with good verbal and written communication skills. A Guardian ad Litem Volunteer must be objective and non-judgmental and be able to interact with people of various educational, economic and ethnic backgrounds.

Requirements

The process of becoming a Guardian ad Litem Volunteer requires a written application, three personal/professional references and a criminal record check. A staff member will conduct a personal interview. A volunteer must complete 30 hours of required training. The Volunteer will be sworn in by a district court judge before assignment of his or her first case. The GAL Volunteer will commit to at least 4 hours per month on appointed cases.

Training & Supervision

The North Carolina Volunteer Guardian ad Litem training curriculum is taught by certified and experienced GAL trainers or staff. Volunteers also receive continuing education on advocacy issues. Guardian ad Litem Volunteers are supervised by the program staff.